

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

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FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7534

INFO AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

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SUBJ: ST KITTS DEPUTY PREMIER REQUESTS MEETING WITH CIVAIR
OFFICIALS

1. ST KITTS DEPUTY PREMIER PAUL SOUTHWELL, WHO ARRIVES
WASHINGTON AUG 4 ON INTERNATIONAL VISITORS PROGRAM, WOULD
APPRECIATE OPPORTUNITY TO CALL ON APPROPRIATE STATE AND CIVAIR
OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS ST KITTS INTEREST IN BWIA'S REQUEST TO
CAB FOR ROUTE RIGHTS FROM NEW YORK TO PORT OF SPAIN VIA ST KITTS.

2. FYI-BOTH DEPUTY PREMIER SOUTHWELL AND ATTORNEY GENERAL
LEE MOORE TOOK OPPORTUNITY OF POLOFF'S VISIT TO ST KITTS ON
JULY 23-24 TO RE-EMPHASIZE IMPORTANCE OF BWIA'S ROUTE REQUEST
TO ST KITTS' HOPES OF EXPANDING ITS INFANT TOURIST INDUSTRY.
ST KITTS GOVT HAS PLACED SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENTS AND EFFORT
INTO TOURIST DEVELOPMENT IN HOPE THAT INCREASED REVENUES FROM
TOURISM WILL HELP OFFSET DECLINING REVENUES FROM SUGAR AND
DRASTICALLY INCREASED COSTS OF IMPORTS. ST KITTS EXPERIENCED
WORST DROUGHT IN 40 YEARS IN 1973 AND EXPECTS 1974 TO BE
EVEN WORSE. ACTUAL SUGAR PRODUCTION FOR 1974 WAS 26,000 TONS,
SLIGHTLY HIGHER THAN IN 1973, BUT LESS THAN HALF OF AVERAGE
PRODUCTION FIVE YEARS AGO. THOUGH ST KITTS RECEIVED HIGHER
PRICES THIS YEAR FOR SUGAR SOLD TO U.S. UNDER COMMONWEALTH
SUGAR AGREEMENT AND FOR LIMITED SALES TO U.S. AND VENEZUELA,
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THESE HAVE NOT OFFSET HIGHER COST OF IMPORTED GOODS.

3. IN EFFORT TO EXPAND TOURISM ST KITTS HAS UNDERTAKEN EC\$18 MILLION AIRPORT EXTENSION PROJECT, FINANCED BY U.K. AID (GRANTS AND SOFT LOANS), WHICH IS SCHEDULED FOR COMPLETION IN OCTOBER AND WILL PERMIT LANDINGS BY LARGE COMMERCIAL JETS. ST KITTS GOVT IS ALSO MAJOR SHAREHOLDER IN HOLIDAY INN, OPENED IN AUG 1973, AND MINORITY SHAREHOLDER IN LARGELY U.S.-OWNED FRIGATE BAY HOTEL DEVELOPMENT, SCHEDULED TO OPEN IN MID-1975. SOUTHWELL HAS RECENTLY RETURNED FROM FOUR WEEK TOURIST PROMOTION VISIT TO U.S. AND CANADA.

4. SUCCESS OF THESE EFFORTS TO EXPAND TOURISM NOW HINGES ALMOST ENTIRELY ON IMPROVING ST KITTS' ACCESSIBILITY TO NORTH AMERICAN TOURIST MARKET. THERE ARE NOW NO DIRECT FLIGHTS BETWEEN U.S. AND ST KITTS. EASTERN AIRLINES HOLDS ROUTE RIGHTS THROUGH ST KITTS, ACQUIRED WHEN EASTERN TOOK OVER CARIBAIR, BUT HAS DEFERRED EXERCISE OF THESE RIGHTS. BWIA HAS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN ACQUIRING ROUTE RIGHTS FROM NEW YORK TO PORT OF SPAIN VIA ST KITTS. GOVT OF ST KITTS HAS INDICATED IT WOULD BE MOST SATISFIED WITH INITIATION OF ONCE-A-WEEK SERVICE BY BWIA FROM NEW YORK.

5. COMMENT: THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT DIRECT SERVICE TO U.S. WOULD VASTLY IMPROVE POTENTIAL OF ST KITTS' TOURIST INDUSTRY. IF BWIA IS WILLING TO PROVIDE SUCH SERVICE, AND IF GRANT OF THIS TYPE ROUTE WOULD NOT BE DISADVANTAGEOUS TO OTHER U.S. INTERESTS, IT WOULD SEEM REASONABLE TO APPROVE IT. PERHAPS SOME CONSULTATIONS WITH EASTERN RE POSSIBILITY OF PROVIDING ST KITTS SERVICE WOULD BE APPROPRIATE. IN ANY CASE, ST KITTS UNDERSTANDABLY VIEWS ISSUE WITH GREAT CONCERN. WE REALIZE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN SCHEDULING APPROPRIATE MEETING DURING AUGUST, BUT WOULD APPRECIATE ANYTHING DEPT COULD DO TO ARRANGE FOR SOUTHWELL TO SPEND SOME TIME WITH PERSONS KNOWLEDGEABLE IN THIS FIELD. IT WOULD ALSO BE USEFUL IN OUR DEALINGS WITH SOUTHWELL AND GOVT OF ST KITTS IF EMBASSY COULD BE KEPT INFORMED OF STATUS OF BWIA ROUTE REQUEST. DONOVAN

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